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SCHIEFFER: Pentagon officials said tonight they now believe they know what caused the series of mysterious explosions that left more than a dozen ships damaged in the Red Sea earlier this summer. That means that U.S. forces that have been searching the area for mines will soon be returning to home bases. Pentagon correspondent Bill Lynch has details.

LYNCH: CBS News has learned the United States is about to wind down its Red Sea mine hunt and will begin recalling Navy helicopter units in early September. The Navy has declared safe two Saudi ports preparing to welcome thousands of Moslem pilgrims and expects to complete a sweep of the Egyptian coast soon. At least 19 ships were rocked by confirmed mine explosions from July 9 to August 15. Despite massive mine-sweeping operations involving several nations, no actual mines have been found. U. S. intelligence sources told CBS News the mines are believed to be sophisticated Italian devices called Mantas, which are set off by the magnetic fields of passing ships. Ostensibly sold to the Bolivian Navy, the mines wound up instead in Libya, which, according to U.S. intelligence, later used the freighter Ghat to spread them in strategic parts of the Red Sea and Gulf of Suez. U.S. officials suspect the mines automatically deactivated themselves after about a month and may now be harmless. Italy joined the mine-sweeping operation this week and is now said to be investigating to see if any Italian mines fell into the wrong hands. Egypt, which sought French, British and American help in clearing the mystery mines, has not yet declared the crisis officially over. When it does, it's doubtful the biggest puzzle will have been solved. Just what was Libya, perhaps with help from other radical quarters, trying to accomplish and will they try again. Bill Lynch, CBS News, the Pentagon.